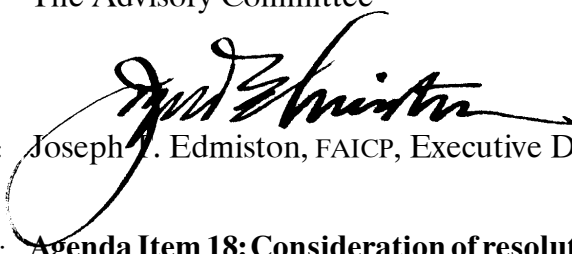


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: January 23, 2006

From :  Joseph J. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 18: Consideration of resolution authorizing the addition of the following projects to the Conservancy's Acquisition Workprogram: Pickens Ridge- Angeles Forest Connector; Soledad-Canyon Angeles Forest West Connector; Topanga Canyon Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park North Addition; Stokes-Canyon King Gillette Connector; Summit Valley-Topanga State Park West Connector; Santa Clara River-Chiquito Canyon Val Verde Open Space, and Deer Lake Highlands lower addition.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the resolution authorizing the addition of the following projects to the Conservancy's Acquisition Workprogram: Pickens Ridge-Angeles Forest Connector; Soledad-Canyon Angeles Forest West Connector; Topanga Canyon Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park North Addition; Stokes-Canyon King Gillette Connector; Summit Valley-Topanga State Park West Connector; Santa Clara River-Chiquito Canyon Val Verde Open Space, and Deer Lake Highlands lower addition.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33203 and 33211 (c) of the Public Resources Code

Background: The current Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Acquisition Workprogram was adopted in 2000. Subsequent to that adoption, the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor was expanded a third time to include all lands south of the Antelope Valley (SR14) Freeway in the Santa Clara River watershed. In addition, the passage of Proposition 50 modified the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains Zone to include all portions of the Los Angeles River watershed from the northernmost point of the City of Vernon. During the last five years projects have been periodically added. All projects in the adopted 2000 Workprogram were prioritized based extensive, quantified evaluation criteria. However, subsequent projects have not been evaluated with these criteria.

Generally, projects are added to the Workprogram to take advantage of opportunity purchases (such as tax defaulted properties and bargain sales), to accommodate area specific funding sources, and to compensate for prior omissions. The proposed action would add seven projects to the Acquisition Workprogram.

A project boundary map, a brief project description, and the rational for adding each project follows. Existing Workprogram projects are also shown. In order for the Conservancy to authorize a grant to another entity to acquire a property, it must be on the Acquisition

Workprogram. Furthermore, in Los Angeles County, in order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to use Proposition A Excess Funds on a project, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually by the Conservancy to the Governor as part of its annual report.

Pickens Ridge-Angeles Forest Connector

This unique property (approximately 300 acres) extends south from the Angeles National Forest boundary deep into the unincorporated neighborhoods of La Crescenta. The majority of the proposed project area is within Goss Canyon with portions in Pickens and Eagle Canyons. The project area includes the lower portion of a historic trail between La Crescenta and the old fire look out station at the summit of 5074-foot high Mount Lukens. Staff hike this trail and visually assessed the majority of the property this winter. The majority of the property is owned by one individual who lives in the immediate area and who has expressed an interest in permanent protection for the property. The homestead portion of the property includes a large level area, gardens, orchards and historic structures. The trail, interpretation, ecological and community facility potentials of the site are unlimited. Not adding this project to the Workprogram to date was just an oversight. In addition, staff may seek Proposition a Excess Funds to acquire a portion of the project area. This proposed project has additional supplemental information attached.

Soledad-Canyon Angeles Forest West Connector

This multi-thousand-acre nomination comprises the consensus highest priority habitat linkage between the two section of the Angeles National Forest. The core of this nomination is a Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) jointly assembled by numerous public agencies including the Conservancy and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. Essentially, the CAPP is a blueprint of the minimum amount of protected land necessary to maintain a fully functional habitat linkage across State Route 14. The South Coast Wildlands Project's "San Gabriel-Castaic" linkage plan provides further analysis of this area. The proposed project boundary was expanded by staff to include additional core habitat all along the CAPP boundary which is depicted. Staff has received the go ahead from the 5th Supervisorial District to use Proposition A Excess Funds for several tax defaulted properties within the project boundary.

Topanga Canyon Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park North Addition

This project fills in a small gap along the northern boundary of Ed Edelman-Summit Valley Park. The subject property is slated to be acquired through a Chapter 8 sale by the MRCA using in lieu mitigation funds. It contains a large percentage of oak woodland.

Stokes Canyon-King Gillette Connector

This project is designed to provide connectivity between lower Stokes Canyon and the new King Gillette Ranch (Soka University) acquisition. Towards the south end this objective will have to probably be achieved through conservation easements. To the north, the MRCA is

planning to acquire numerous small lots in an old small lot subdivision via a Chapter 8 sale (tax defaulted) with Los Angeles County possibly using Proposition A Excess Funds.

Summit Valley-Topanga State Park West Connector

The Conservancy recently granted funds to the MRCA to acquire County surplus properties in the Garapito Canyon tributary of Topanga Canyon. Those parcels are shown in purple on the attached maps. There is much merit in connecting these parcel to Ed Edelman- Summit Valley Park to the north. The MRCA is planning to acquire several properties in this proposed Workprogram project boundary via a Chapter 8 sale (tax defaulted) with Los Angeles County possibly using Proposition A Excess Funds.

Santa Clara River-Chiquito Canyon Val Verde Open Space

Chiquito Canyon lies at the western edge of the perpetually growing suburban expansion of the Santa Clarita Valley. This complex of open space provides a connection between the Sierra Madre range and the Santa Clara River. It also provides close in usable open space for the residents of the small, unincorporated Val Verde enclave. The MRCA is planning to acquire several properties in this proposed Workprogram project boundary via a Chapter 8 sale (tax defaulted) with Los Angeles County possibly using Proposition A Excess Funds.

Deer Lake Highlands -Lower Addition

The MRCA has acquired much of the open space surrounding the approved Deerlake Ranch development project. However, valuable satellite pieces remain to be acquired and are not on existing Workprogram projects. The MRCA is planning to acquire a couple properties in this proposed Workprogram project boundary via a Chapter 8 sale (tax defaulted) with Los Angeles County possibly using Proposition A Excess Funds.